BUDDHIST MORALITY: Heteronomous or Autonomous

CORRUPT • RIGHT
WRONG
FORBIDDEN
DUTY • GOOD

Sharing with Bro. Billy Tan

Examine the difference between Heteronomous and Autonomous Morality – how can we best cultivate virtues and morality to lead a more peaceful and wholesome life.

Abandon all evil ways,
Enter the good life,
Purify one's mind
– this is the teaching
of the Buddhas.

(Dhammapada verse 183)

EXPERIENTIAL REALITIES

Sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṁ,
Kusalassa upasampadā,
Sacitta pariyodapanaṁ ~
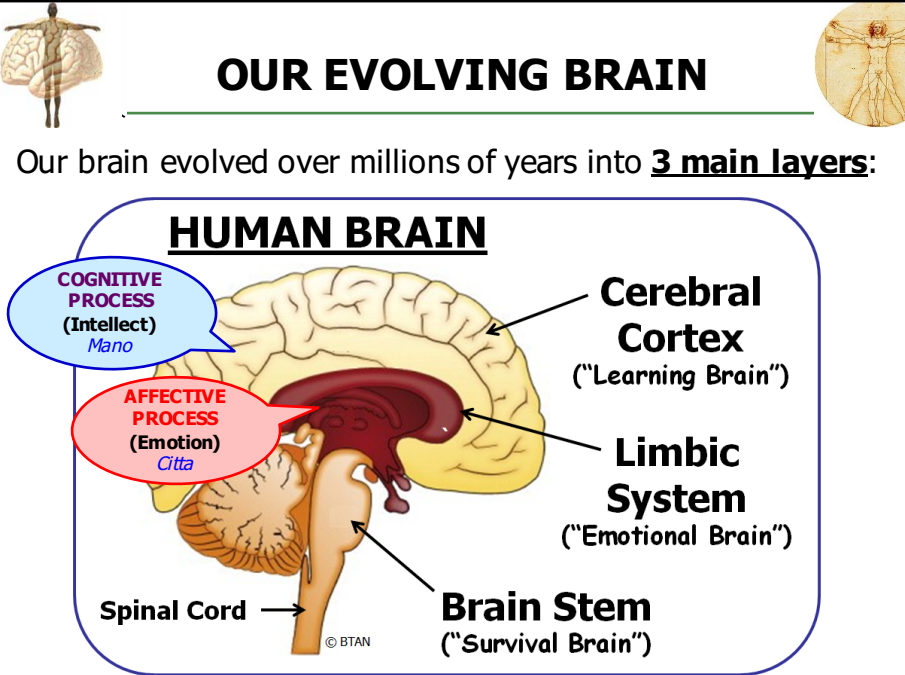Etaṁ Buddhāna' sāsanaṁ.

Mind As An Activity

MENTAL EXPERIENCE

THREE PARTS OF MENTAL EXPERIENCES:

- **Viññāna** : Process of Perception ("perception")
  - ➤ what is perceive through the sense organs;

- **Mano** : Cognitive Process ("conception & intellect")
  - ➤ categorized interpretation of perception giving meaning to what was perceived;

- **Citta** : Affective Process ("emotion")
  - ➤ pleasant & unpleasant feelings arouse the emotions, leading to emotional excitement and reactions;
  - ➤ personalizing the experience with the notion there is a "self" to be affected.
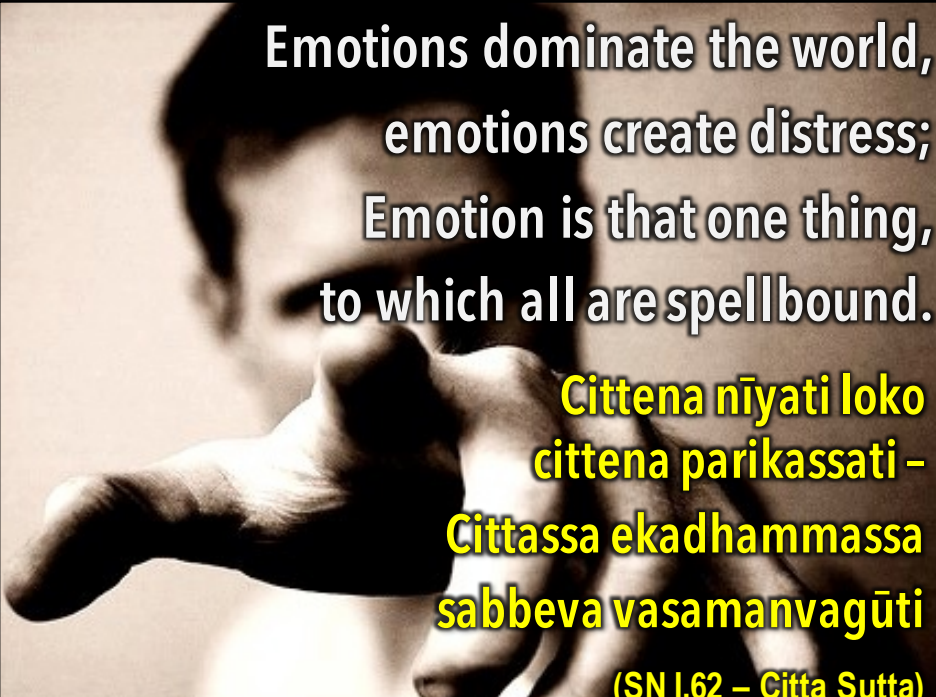
THE SUBLIME EIGHTFOLD WAY
Page 4

OUR EVOLVING BRAIN

Our brain evolved over millions of years into **3 main layers**:

HUMAN BRAIN

COGNITIVE PROCESS
(Intellect)
Mano

AFFECTIVE PROCESS
(Emotion)
Citta

Cerebral Cortex
("Learning Brain")

Limbic System
("Emotional Brain")

Brain Stem
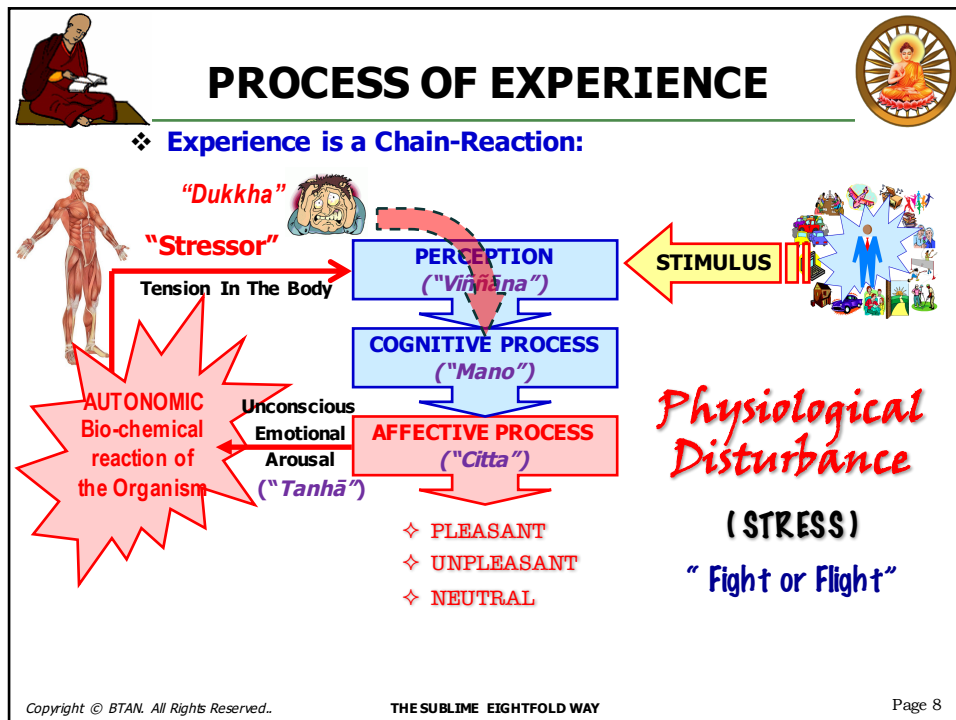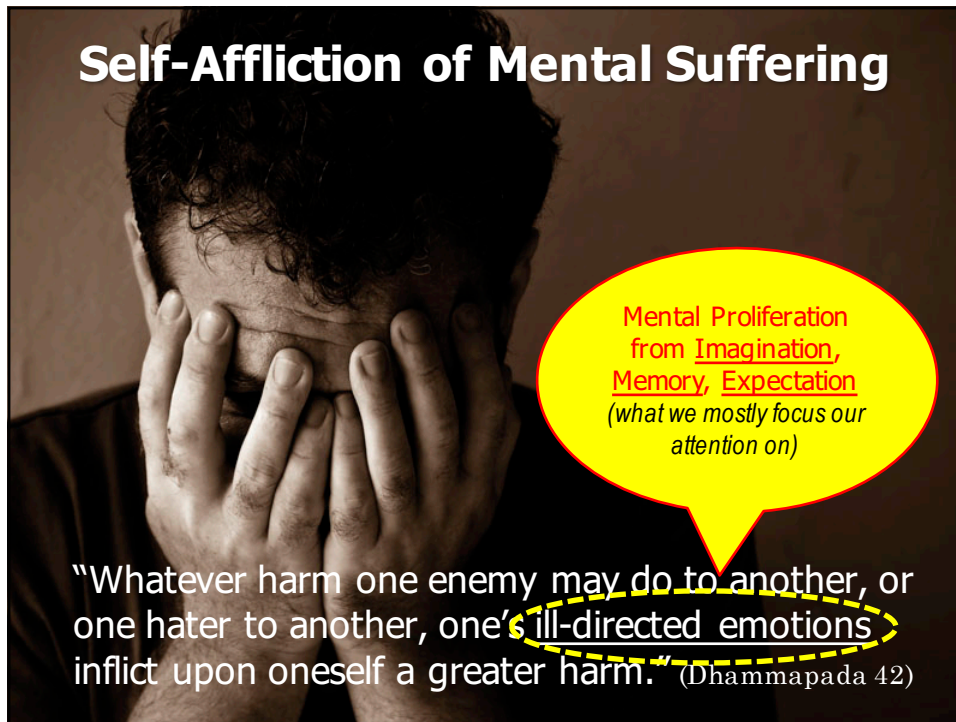("Survival Brain")

Spinal Cord

© BTAN

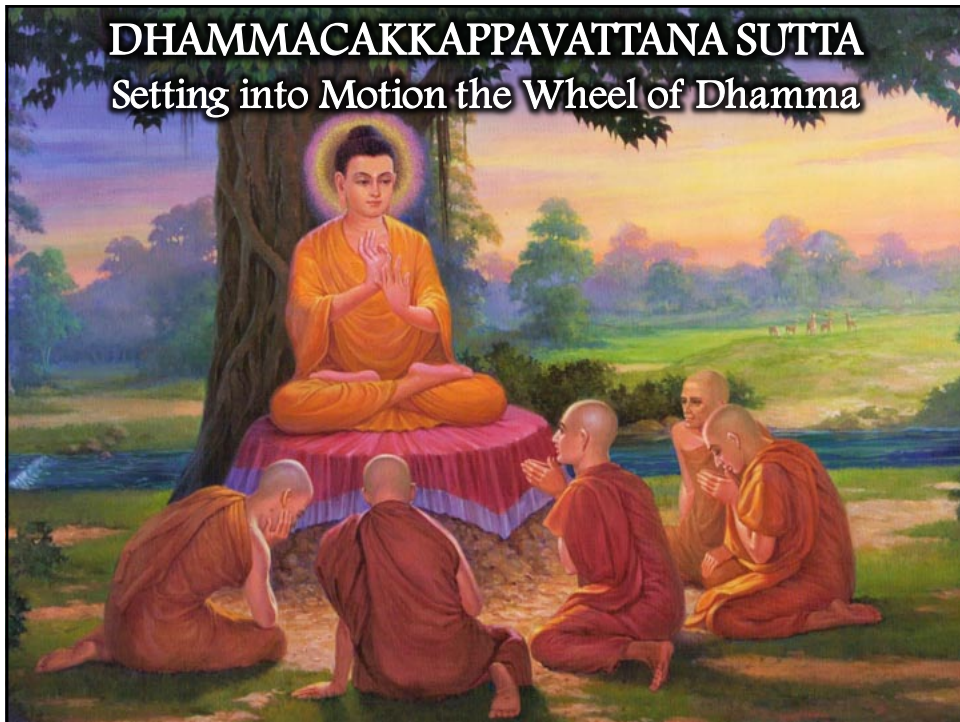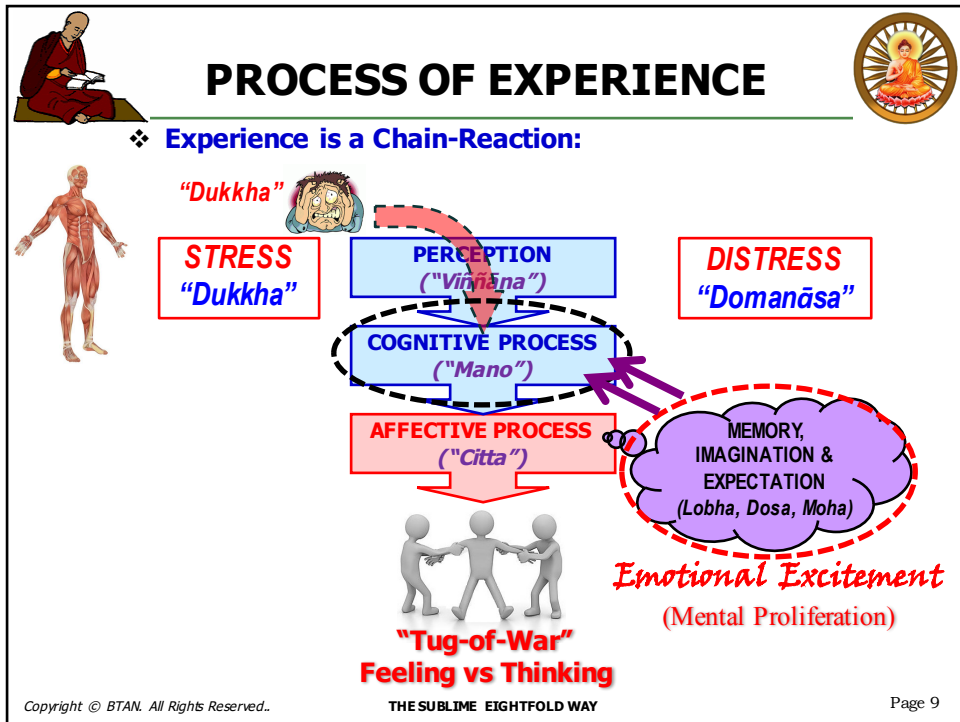Copyright © BTAN. All Rights Reserved..   THE SUBLIME EIGHTFOLD WAY   Page 5

Emotions dominate the world,
emotions create distress;
Emotion is that one thing,
to which all are spellbound.

**Cittena nīyati loko
cittena parikassati –
Cittassa ekadhammassa
sabbeva vasamanvagūti**

(SN I.62 – Citta Sutta)

Self-Affliction of Mental Suffering

Mental Proliferation from Imagination, Memory, Expectation *(what we mostly focus our attention on)*

"Whatever harm one enemy may do to another, or one hater to another, one's ill-directed emotions inflict upon oneself a greater harm." (Dhammapada 42)

PROCESS OF EXPERIENCE

❖ **Experience is a Chain-Reaction:**

"Dukkha"

"Stressor"

Tension In The Body

PERCEPTION *("Viññāna")* ← **STIMULUS**

COGNITIVE PROCESS *("Mano")*

AUTONOMIC Bio-chemical reaction of the Organism

Unconscious Emotional Arousal *("Tanhā")*

AFFECTIVE PROCESS *("Citta")*

✧ PLEASANT
✧ UNPLEASANT
✧ NEUTRAL

Physiological Disturbance

(STRESS)

" Fight or Flight "

THE SUBLIME EIGHTFOLD WAY Page 8

PROCESS OF EXPERIENCE

❖ **Experience is a Chain-Reaction:**

"Dukkha"

STRESS
"Dukkha"

PERCEPTION
("Viññāna")

DISTRESS
"Domanāsa"

COGNITIVE PROCESS
("Mano")

AFFECTIVE PROCESS
("Citta")

MEMORY, IMAGINATION & EXPECTATION
(Lobha, Dosa, Moha)

Emotional Excitement
(Mental Proliferation)

"Tug-of-War"
Feeling vs Thinking

Copyright © BTAN. All Rights Reserved..   **THE SUBLIME EIGHTFOLD WAY**   Page 9

DHAMMACAKKAPPAVATTANA SUTTA
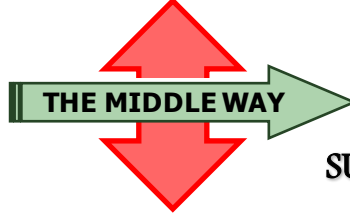### Setting into Motion the Wheel of Dhamma

THE MIDDLE WAY

Kāmesu-kāma-sukhallikā-nuyoga
INDULGENCE IN SENSUAL PLEASURES
**Expression Of Emotional Excitement
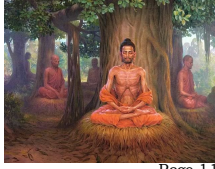By Releasing Tensions in Action**

THE MIDDLE WAY

*Conscious Relaxation,
Introspective Attention,
Mental Equilibrium.*
SUBLIME EIGHTFOLD WAY

Atta-kilamathā-nuyoga
SELF-TORMENT & SELF-MORTIFICATION
**Suppression Of Emotional Urges
By With-holding all Tensions**

Copyright © BTAN. All Rights Reserved..   THE SUBLIME EIGHTFOLD WAY   Page 11
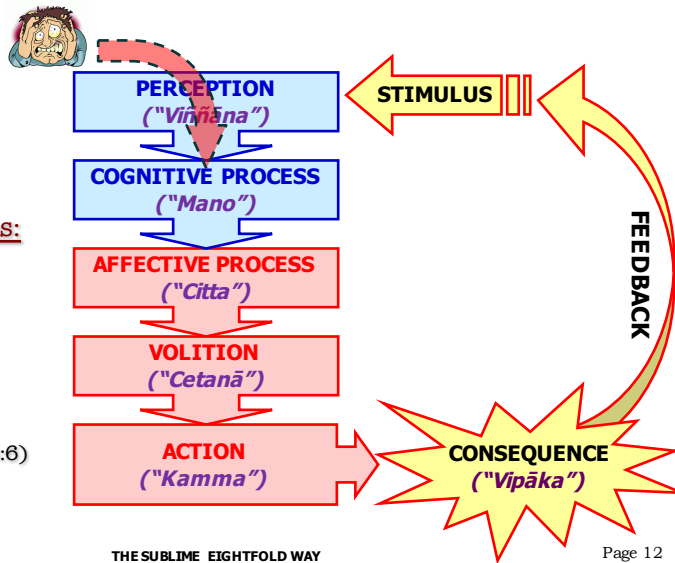

PROCESS OF EXPERIENCE

❖ **Experience is a Chain-Reaction:**

PERCEPTION
("Viññāna")

STIMULUS

COGNITIVE PROCESS
("Mano")

8 Worldly Conditions:

☒ Gain & Loss
☒ Fame & Ill-fame
☒ Praise & Blame
☒ Pleasure & Pain

(Lokavipatti Sutta AN 8:6)

AFFECTIVE PROCESS
("Citta")

VOLITION
("Cetanā")

FEEDBACK

ACTION
("Kamma")

CONSEQUENCE
("Vipāka")

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The 10 Unwholesome Kammas

1. Harming life;
2. Taking what is not given;   **BODY**
3. Sexual misconduct;

4. False speech;
5. Malicious / divisive speech;   **SPEECH**
6. Harsh / harmful speech;
7. Gossip;

8. Covetousness;
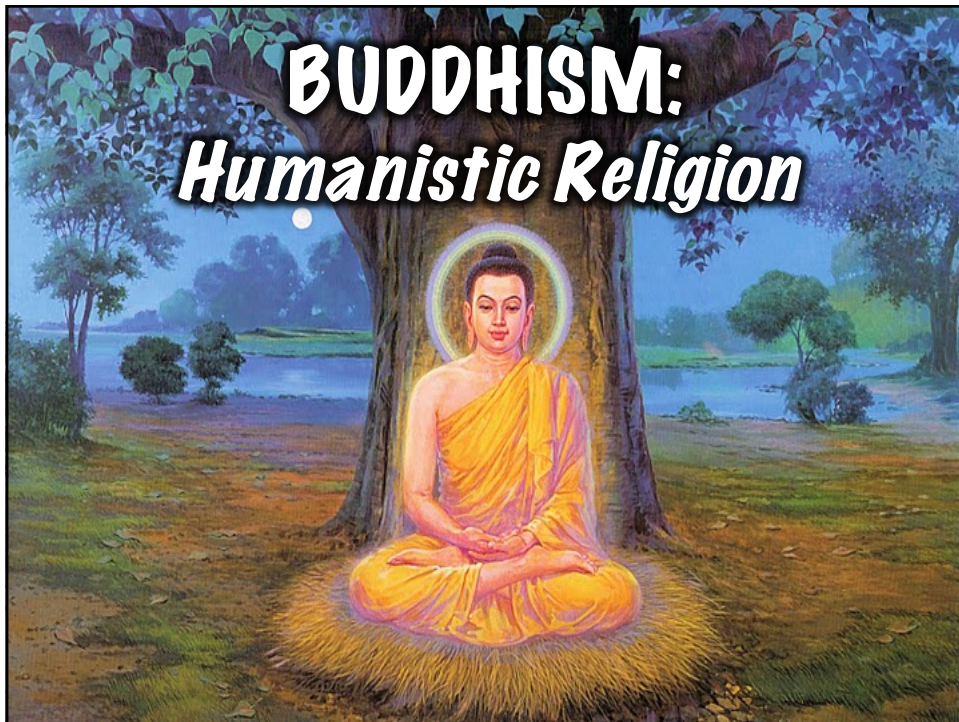9. Ill-will / hatred;   **MIND**
10. Wrong view / delusion.

Not Harming Self

Not Harming Others

THE SUBLIME EIGHTFOLD WAY   Page 13

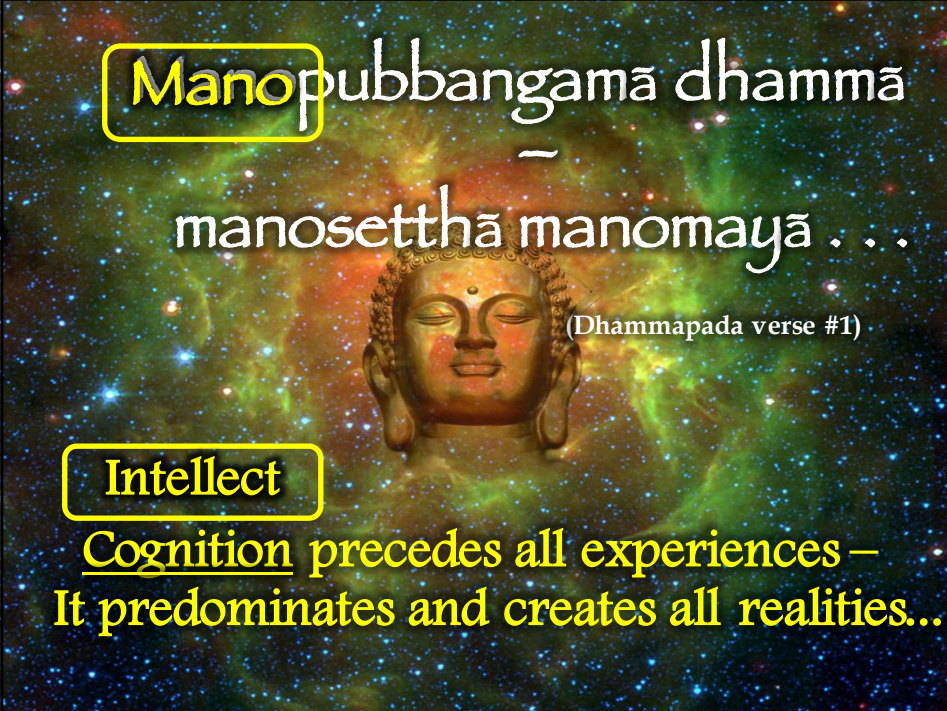# BUDDHISM:
Humanistic Religion

7

DEFINITION OF "HUMANISTIC"

❑ *a doctrine, attitude, or way of life centered on **human interests or values**; especially, a philosophy that usually rejects supernaturalism and stresses on individual's dignity and worth and capacity for **self-realization through reason**.*

(Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

THE SUBLIME EIGHTFOLD WAY
Page 15

Manopubbangamā dhammā ~

manosetthā manomayā . . .

(Dhammapada verse #1)

Mano — Intellect

Cognition precedes all experiences –
It predominates and creates all realities...

8

OUR LEARNING BRAIN

- ✓ Attention system, Long Term Memory
- ✓ Logic, Critical thinking
- ✓ Lateral thinking (creativity & imagination)
- ✓ Decision making, Goal setting, Planning
- ✓ Judgment, Reasoning, Rationalizing

Frontal Lobe

Parietal Lobe

Parietal lobe
Frontal lobe
Occipital lobe
Temporal lobe
Cerebellum

Temporal Lobe

Pre-Frontal Cortex (PFC)

Cerebral cortex

Occipital Lobe

THE SUBLIME EIGHTFOLD WAY Page 17

Sublime Eightfold Way

Harmonious Perspective
"Right View"
(Sammā Diṭṭhi)

Paññā
(wisdom)

Harmonious Equilibrium
"Right Concentration"
(Sammā Samādhi)

Harmonious Orientation
"Right Intentions"
(Sammā Sankappa)

Harmonious Attention
"Right Mindfulness"
(Sammā Sati)

Harmonious Speech
"Right Speech"
(Sammā Vācā)

Harmonious Exercise
"Right Effort"
(Sammā Vāyāma)

Harmonious Action
"Right Action"
(Sammā Kammanta)

Samādhi
(tranquility)

Harmonious Lifestyle
"Right Livelihood"
(Sammā Ājīva)

Sīla
(morality)

THE SUBLIME EIGHTFOLD WAY Page 18

ASPIRATION OF SELFLESSNESS

- The aspiration to relieve suffering reduces activation in the Amygdala;

- People differ in their skill level at voluntary down-regulation of **negative affect**, as reflected in the decreased activation of the Amygdala, which is accompanied by increased activation in the Ventromedial Pre-frontal Cortex.

HETERONOMOUS or AUTONOMOUS

❑ *"hetero"* – external; *"nomous"* – regulation, govern

❑ **HETERONOMOUS**:
subject to external controls and impositions;
(under the control or influence of external forces).

❑ **AUTONOMOUS**: (**"auto"** – internal)
having the power or right to govern itself:
(under its own control or self-regulation).

(Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

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HETERONOMOUS versus AUTONOMOUS

● **Heteronomous Morality**

("sīlabbata–parāmāsa") or <u>attachment to rights & rituals</u>**:**

➢ Stated as **<u>"laws"</u>** or commandments from God;

➢ Breaking laws and commandments is prohibited;

➢ <u>Fearing</u> Sinful and Evil repercussions;

➢ <u>Punishment</u> for wrongdoing (going to Hell);

➢ Craving for <u>reward</u> from righteousness (going to Heaven);

➢ Be <u>God-fearing</u> citizens.

THE SUBLIME EIGHTFOLD WAY   Page 21

7 HABITS OF HETERONOMOUS BUDDHIST MORALITY

1. *Ritual Attachment!*
2. *Merit Seeking!*
3. *Superstition!*
4. *Kamma Fearing!*
5. *Past Life Blaming!*
6. *Next Life Cursing!*
7. *Deva Worship!*

THE SUBLIME EIGHTFOLD WAY   Page 22

HETERONOMOUS versus AUTONOMOUS

● **Autonomous Morality**

("kusala mūla") or <u>wholesome skillful means</u>:

➢ Stated as **precepts** or "training rules" or "guidance";

➢ Precepts are for <u>training</u> and <u>guidance</u> of cultivation;

➢ <u>Knowledge</u> & <u>understanding</u> of the good & wholesome;

➢ All actions are subject to the ancient laws of <u>kamma</u>;

➢ Avoid evil, do good, purify mind to <u>become awaken</u>;

➢ **Good intentions** lead to wellness, peace, and happiness.

THE SUBLIME EIGHTFOLD WAY   Page 23

HETERONOMOUS versus AUTONOMOUS

● **Heteronomous Morality**

("sīlabbata–parāmāsa") or <u>attachment to rites & rituals</u>:

➢ Stated as **"laws"** or commandments;

➢ Fearing Sinful and Evil repercussions;

➢ <u>Punishment</u> for wrongdoing (going to Hell);

➢ Craving for <u>reward</u> from righteousness (going to Heaven).

FEAR & GREED

● **Autonomous**

("kusala mūla")

➢ Stated as **prec**

➢ <u>Knowledge</u> & <u>understan</u> the good & wholesome;

➢ All actions are subject to ncient laws of kamma;

➢ **Good intentions** lead to wellness, peace, and happiness.

Paññā
Wisdom

THE SUBLIME EIGHTFOLD WAY   Page 24

Three things lead to happiness...
Forgiveness of the past,
Gratitude in the present,
Kindness towards the future.
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HAPPINESS 101

PAST: *FORGIVENESS*

● Look back with forgiveness... **Oxytocin** is released, the hormone of empathy and bonding, boosting the immune system.

PRESENT: *GRATITUDE*

● Look around with gratitude, being thankful for one's blessings... **Endorphin** is released, a powerful natural painkiller hormone that heals physical and emotional pain, while boosting the immune system.

FUTURE: *KINDNESS*

● Aspirations of kindness releases **Oxytocin**, altruistic joy releases **Endorphin**. Positive attention and enthusiasm towards the future releases **Dopamine**... hormone of energetic anticipation, and **Serotonin**... hormone of attention & concentration.

Magnanimous
Empathetic
Thoughtful
Tender
Altruistic

©BTAN

Metta

Send love when we see hatred,
forgiveness when we see resentment,
strength when we see weakness,
tranquility when we see chaos,
peace when we see hostility,
courage when we see fear,
hope when we see despair,
comfort when we see pain,
kindness when we see cruelty,
compassion when we see suffering.

May suffering ones be suffering free, the fear-struck fearless be;
May grieving ones shed all grief, may all beings find peace & relief.